

Supreme Court to hold off on punishing lawmakers over education funding

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The state Supreme Court will hold off on whether to punish lawmakers over the lack of a K-12 school-funding plan until after the special legislative session ends.

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OLYMPIA — The state Supreme Court will hold off on whether to punish lawmakers over the lack of a K-12 school-funding plan until after the special legislative session ends.

The court found the state in contempt last autumn for not doing enough toward a full plan as required by the court's 2012 McCleary decision. Justices said then they would hold off on punishing the state to see what lawmakers did in the 2015 session.

The regular session ended last Friday; lawmakers began a 30-day special session Wednesday.

In an order dated Thursday and signed by Chief Justice Barbara Madsen, the court acknowledged that because "there has not been final action on either the budget or McCleary-related bills, the court's consideration of contempt sanctions" are delayed for now.

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House Majority Leader Pat Sullivan, D-Covington, said he thought that approach made sense.

Republicans and Democrats must find [compromise on the 2015-17 operating budget](#), which will include McCleary education funding. Lawmakers are also discussing plans to reform local property-tax levies used for education, another requirement of the McCleary decision.

Legislators have shown they're working toward a resolution on McCleary-decision issues such as all-day kindergarten and reducing K-3 class sizes, said Sen. David Frockt, D-Seattle.

"I think they were wise to hold off until we get done with everything," Frockt said of the court.

Rep. Chad Magendanz, R-Issaquah, said he "was grateful to hear that ruling."

"The process is working," said Magendanz, "and we don't want to rush something this significant."

In an [update it was required to give to the court this week](#), the Attorney General's Office acknowledged "the Legislature did not complete its work by the close of the regular session."

Justices are ordering that the state provide the court an update on the day after the current 30-day special session ends.

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